

REMARKS:

This application has been carefully studied and amended in view of the Office Action dated January 5, 2007. Reconsideration of that action is requested in view of the following.

The drawing has been replaced by a new sheet of drawings wherein various extraneous material, including the reference characters "5" and "10" have been deleted.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the objection to claim 21 as being improper dependent claim. The Examiner's comments regarding "the apparatus is not used in any positively recited process steps" is not understood. In that regard, each of the process steps (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (g) refers to specific structure from the apparatus of claim 17 which is being used in the recited process steps. If the Examiner still believes that the reference to the apparatus in terms of claim 17 is improper, applicants will amend claim 21 to specifically recite the structure of that apparatus rather than using the shorthand reference to claim 17.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested of the rejections of the claims as unpatentable over Okamura whether taken singly or in combination with other references. As regards the pending claims, claim 17 is an independent claim. The remaining claims are dependent on claim 17 or refer to claim 17. In order to more

clearly define the invention claim 17 has been amended with regard to the unit B. More specifically, the unit is now defined as being arranged along a movable bar, movable in an Y-direction and optionally also in a X-direction and that each of the functional units produces an image in each case, one part of the digitally imageable layer by moving the entire bar in the Y-direction and moving the bar or the imageable layer in the X-direction.

It is respectfully submitted that Okamura does not anticipate nor reasonably suggest the claimed invention. At the outset it is noted that Okamura does not relate to the production of flexographic printing plates comprising the steps of recording a digitally imageable layer by means of an imaging unit (B) (i.e. thermal printing heads, IR lasers, inkjet printing heads) for producing a mask on the flexographic printing element, exposure of the flexographic printing element to actinic light through the mask produced, and removal of unexposed parts by means of a solvent, drying and optionally aftertreatment. Okamura is related to the completely different technology of offset printing plates. The process taught by Okamura for producing offset printing plates comprises the steps of positively charging a so-called OPC layer (organic photoconductor layer) by corona discharge treatment, applying laser light to the positively charged OPC layer, thereby forming electrostatic images, which

correspond to figures, allowing positively charged toner particles to adhere to the electrostatic latent image, fixation of the toner particles by heating by a halogen lamp, and developing using an alkaline liquid, whereby the OPC layer other than the fixed toner image is removed, followed by a rinsing treatment of the plate surface and an application of rubber liquid to the plate surface, see col. 1, line 31 to col. 2, line 38 of Okamura. In particular, the Okamura process does not involve any photopolymerisation of a photopolymerizable layer by exposing the photopolymerizable layer through a mask to actinic light, followed by removal of the unexposed (non-photopolymerised) parts of the photopolymerizable layer by treatment with a solvent.


The process for the inventive in-line production of flexographic printing plates using the apparatus of claim 17 is discussed on page 6, line 8 to page 7, line 26 of the specification. The unit (B) and the arrangement of the functional units, selected from thermal printing heads, IR lasers and inkjet printing heads, along a movable bar, is definitely not disclosed in Okamura.

With regard to the secondary references, neither Knoll et al. nor Leenders et al. teaches or suggests the unit (B) for the digitally imaging of the flexographic printing element, and the corresponding process steps of digitally imaging the flexographic

printing element using the unit (B). Accordingly, this secondary art does not overcome the deficiencies of Okamura.

In view of the above remarks and amendments, this application should be passed to issue.

Respectfully Submitted,
CONNOLLY BOVE LODGE & HUTZ LLP

BY: 
Harold Pezzner
Reg. No. 22,112
1007 N. Orange Street
Wilmington, DE 19801
(302) 658-9141

@PFDesktop\:::ODMA/MHODMA/IMANDMS;CB;540282;1